IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for minimizing thermal gradients across a mask, comprising the steps of:

applying a heat source to the mask through a filter; and

operating the filter such that the radiation from the heat source passes to areas of the mask that are not being exposed to radiation from an exposure source while filtering heat to those areas of the mask which are subject thermal heating due to the radiation from the source exposure.

2. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the filter filters the radiation from the heat source such that the radiation from the heat source illuminates portions of the mask not illuminated by the exposure source comprising lithography system optics.

3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the filter is comprised of a density pattern complimentary to the pattern density of the mask.

4. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 wherein the filter controls the wavelength of the radiation from the heat source that passes through it.

5. (Original) The process of claim 2 wherein the filter is comprised of both a pattern that

illuminates portions of the mask not illuminated by the lithography system optics and a density pattern complimentary to the pattern density of the mask.

6. (Original) The process of claim 5 wherein the filters are separate filters.

7. (Original) The process of claim 2 wherein the filter also controls the wavelength of light that passes through it.

8. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the filter is made from liquid crystal technology.

9. (Original) The process of claim 4 wherein the filter is an acousto-optic filter.

10. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the filter is an optical mask.

11. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the heat source moves in conjunction with reticle movement.

12. (Original) The process of claim 11 wherein the heat source movement is accomplished by rotation.

13. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the heat source source is stationary and the filter provides a pattern through liquid crystal technology.

Claims 14 - 21 withdrawn

22. (Currently Amended) A process for minimizing thermal gradients across an EUVL mask, comprising the steps of:

applying a heat source to the mask through a filter; and

operating the filter such that the heat from the heat source passes to areas of the mask that are not being exposed to radiation from an exposure source while filtering heat to those areas of the mask which are being exposed to radiation from the exposure source.